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DEPARTMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION

A SYSTEM OF COMPUTING CREDITS

BY NELLIE G. BROWN

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The need for standard methods of grading and recording is being keenly felt in training schools for nurses, owing to several factors.

First, the increase in educational standards makes the work of a training school comparable with that of other technical schools and colleges, and the working out of reciprocal arrangements between schools of this kind demands that consistent and uniform methods of grading, estimating and computing credits be used as a basis for such combination.

Next, state registration laws are compelling small schools to seek affiliation with larger schools, to provide students with the proper kind and amount of training in branches in which the small school is deficient. These schools need similar systems of grading and computing credits, in order that the school receiving students may have evidence of their preparation for advanced work, and that the home school shall be able to record the work done by the student during her absence, in terms common to both.

During the war, information about nursing education has been widely disseminated and one of the results seems to be a shifting of students from one school to another, some to secure broader training and some to obtain work in one particular branch of especial interest to the student. This again emphasizes the need of standard systems, that the past work of these may be evaluated and proper credit given.

In the Standard Curriculum issued by the National League of Nursing Education, several methods of recording theory in units of a definite number of credit hours are given (page 161), but credit points have received little attention as applied to nursing subjects.

The method here described has been in use in all departments of Indiana University during the past two years and is proving satisfactory, though it has not yet been adapted to all the practical work in the Training School for Nurses.

The system can best be described by dividing into three parts—A, Credit Hours; B, Grading; C, Credit Points.

A. Credit Hours.—The system of arranging courses in units of a stated number of clock hours, each, is not new. The number of hours necessary to compose a unit varies in different colleges, ranging usually from 15 to 20. The system described uses the 18 hour unit, 18 clock hours of lecture or class work comprising one unit, and 36

hours of supervised laboratory work also equalling one unit, or 18 hours of lecture.

Illustrations:

	<i>Clock Hours</i>		<i>Credit Hours</i>
	<i>Class</i>	<i>Lab.</i>	
Anatomy and Physiology—	72	36	5
72 hours of class and lecture work counting as 4 credit hours, and 36 hours laboratory work counting as 1 credit hour. Total, 5 credit hours.			

	<i>Clock Hours</i>		<i>Credit Hours</i>
	<i>Class</i>	<i>Lab.</i>	
Bacteriology—	18	36	2
18 hours of class and lecture work give one credit hour and 36 hours laboratory work give one credit hour. Total, 2 credit hours.			

B. Grading.—All written work, demonstrations, class recitations, laboratory work, and examinations are graded by the following scale:

A	96 to 100 Distinguished work only.		
B +	91 to 95	C +	81 to 85
B	90	C	80 Average
Work			
B —	86 to 90	C —	76 to 80
D +	71 to 75	D	70 Passing
D —	65 to 70	Conditioned	

In grading, it should be borne in mind that work of C grade is average work. In a group of 24,—15 to 18 students will fall in the C group (C —, C, or C +), the remaining 6 to 9, making grades either above or below this.

If the majority of students make grades of B or over in any given subject, the instructor should carefully examine the material which is being graded to make sure that its content is not below the average ability of the group.

On the other hand, a group of grades in which C — and D's predominate demands inspection to determine whether the material was clearly presented or whether the questions were vague or ambiguously worded.

Certain groups of especially prepared students will give a higher percentage of C + and B — grades, while others will show a tendency to cluster about C — and D, but the prevalence of C work can be demonstrated in the average group.

That this view of grade values is not at the present time widespread, is shown by the surprise and consternation manifested by high school graduates at the scarcity of A's obtained by them when work of college grade is undertaken.

C. *The Credit Point System.*—This is the newest and least familiar part of the scheme being presented and at first glance seems unnecessary and cumbersome, but a trial displays its advantages better than a description can do.

Example 1.

A grade of "A" obtained in a 1 Credit Hour Course counts 3 Credit Points.

A grade of "B" obtained in a 1 Credit Hour Course counts 2 Credit Points.

A grade of "C" obtained in a 1 Credit Hour Course counts 1 Credit Point.

A grade of "D" (although passing) obtained in a 1 Credit Hour Course counts 0 Credit Point.

These points are doubled for a 2 credit hour course, and trebled for a 3 credit hour course, etc. Courses of less than 1 credit hour also affect the rank. A "B" made in a $\frac{1}{2}$ credit hour course would count 1 credit point. An "A" in the same course 1.5 credit points, and a "C" counts 0.5 credit points. *As many credit points must be made during a semester or term as there are credit hours taken, or the student cannot progress to the next semester's or term's work.* Failure in one or more subjects conditions the student in those subjects, even though credit points entitle the student to progression. This means that failure in single subjects must be atoned for by repetition of the course, by a second examination, or in such manner as the instructor shall see fit. Failure to obtain the proper number of credit points necessitates a repetition of the entire semester's work.

Example 2.

Miss A. Subject	Credit Hours	Grade	Credit Points
Anatomy and Physiology	4	B	8
Bacteriology	2	C —	2
Principles of Nursing	3	D —	0
Elementary Materia Medica	1	C	1
Nursing Ethics	1	C	1
Bandaging	1	B —	2
Nursing Practice (Class room counted as laboratory work in other courses)	2	B	4
	—	—	—
	14		18

An examination of this example shows that Miss A. made D — in Principles of Nursing. This is not a passing grade in the subject but her credit points total 18, while 14 would enable her to progress.

Her failure in Principles of Nursing will have to be made up. Her percentage standing in the semester's work is indicated by 1.28571 (18/14 or 18 14 — 1.28571). These percentages may be carried out as far as necessary to make fine distinctions between the standings of members of a class.

Example 3.

<i>Miss B.</i> Subject	Credit Hours	Grade	Credit Points
Anatomy and Physiology	4	D	0
Bacteriology	2	C	2
Principles of Nursing	3	C —	3
Elementary Materia Medica	1	D	0
Nursing Ethics	1	C	1
Bandaging	1	B	2
Nursing Practice	2	B	4
	—	—	—
	14		12

This example shows that Miss B. made passing grades only in Anatomy and Physiology and in Materia Medica, C and C — in Bacteriology and Principles of Nursing. Her best work was done in Bandaging and Nursing Practice. While she actually failed in nothing, her grades in the courses comprising the greatest number of credit hours were so low that she fails by 2 to bring the number of credit points to the number of credit hours. Her percentage rank is less than 1, or 0.8571. Her only recourse is to repeat the entire work of the semester or leave the school.

The student whose work in practical subjects is better than in theoretical subjects has a better chance than with other systems, because she will probably do well in courses which have laboratory work included, and in the same manner the student who is good at abstract thinking and does less well with practical subjects, can raise her credit points by the work in such branches as Ethics, Sociology, the theoretical parts of Bacteriology, Anatomy, etc.

By calculating a percentage rank by dividing credit points by the credit hours, it is possible to make distinctions between the rank of members of a class, as no two seem to gain exactly the same percentage. By carrying the decimal into the tens or hundreds of thousands, fine distinctions may be made. An analysis of a few examples follows, to show the effect of the system on records of various types:

Example 4.	Credit	Grade	Credit
Subject	Hours		Points
Anatomy and Physiology	4	D	0
Bacteriology	2	C	2
Principles of Nursing	3	A	9
Elementary Materia Medica	1	B	2
Nursing Ethics	1	C	1
Bandaging	1	C	1
Nursing Practice	2	C—	2
	—	—	—
	14		17

Percentage standing, 1.214208.

This shows the record made by a student of average ability. The grade made in Anatomy and Physiology is low and no credit points are obtained, but the "A" in Principles of Nursing more than compensates, and this student is ready for the next semester's work, having 17 credit points instead of the 14 necessary.

Example 5.	Credit	Grade	Credit
Subject	Hours		Points
Anatomy and Physiology	4	D	0
Bacteriology	2	D	0
Principles of Nursing	3	C +	3
Elementary Materia Medica	1	C	1
Nursing Ethics	1	C	1
Bandaging	1	A	3
Nursing Practice	2	A	6
	—	—	—
	14		14

Percentage standing, 1.

Example 5 shows the effect of the system on the record of a student who is good in practical work and poor in theory. She has D in Anatomy and Physiology and D in Bacteriology. The course in Bacteriology has considerable laboratory work attached but the theory is difficult. In Principles of Nursing and Elementary Materia Medica and Nursing Ethics she was able to make C's. Bandaging and Nursing Practice, calling for manual skill, gave her two A's which enabled her to make the 14 credit points necessary for progression.

Example 6. Subject	Credit Hours	Grade	Credit Points
Anatomy and Physiology	4	B	8
Bacteriology	2	D	0
Principles of Nursing	3	B +	6
Elementary Materia Medica	1	B —	2
Nursing Ethics	1	A	3
Bandaging	1	D	0
Nursing Practice	2	D	0
	14		19

Percentage standing, 1.35714.

Example 6 shows the effect of the system on the record of a student who is poor in practical work and good in theory. In Anatomy, Principles of Nursing, and Elementary Materia Medica, she obtained a rank of B. Nursing Ethics—largely abstract thinking—gave A, and Bacteriology, Bandaging, Nursing Practice, three D's. In spite of these she obtains 19 credit points as against 14 needed.

These examples and these analyses demonstrate the method of using the system and are put forth with the hope that they will prove as valuable to instructors and directors of other schools of nursing, as they are proving to the Indiana University School.

HOW WE BUILT OUR DIET CLASS ROOM

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In the basement of our nurses' home was a "fudge" kitchen, larger than necessary for that purpose, and opening out of our class room with double doors. Next to this kitchen was a lavatory, seldom used. In the kitchen was a good cupboard with three glassed-in compartments above, a broad shelf, and two cupboards and set of drawers below, and a good gas range.

We took down the partition between the two rooms, closed the door from the lavatory into the hall and turned the cupboard around against it. The toilet was removed and a good sized white enamel sink installed, the bowl for hand washing was left as it was.

A cabinet was built at a local mill at a cost of fifty dollars. This was 33 inches from the floor and had four drawers and compartments for utensils on each side, and two open spaces for small, three-armed, swinging towel racks. In the compartment is a small shelf, about 12